

What is claimed is:

1. A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

5 (a) forming a semiconductor substrate structure including a substrate, a nitride layer for forming a hard mask, a plurality of conductive patterns, an etch stop layer, an inter-layer insulation layer, an anti-reflective coating (ARC) layer and a photoresist pattern;

10 (b) selectively etching the ARC layer and the nitride layer with use of the photoresist pattern as an etch mask to form a hard mask;

(c) removing the photoresist pattern and the ARC layer;

15 (d) etching the inter-layer insulation layer disposed between the conductive patterns by using the hard mask as an etch mask to form a contact hole exposing the etch stop layer;

(e) removing the etch stop layer formed at a bottom area of the contact hole to expose the substrate; and

20 (f) forming a plug electrically contacted to the exposed substrate, wherein the steps (b) and (d) to (e) proceeds in an in situ condition.

25 2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the conductive pattern has a stack structure including a hard mask insulation layer and a conductive layer.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein at the step

(e), the etch stop layer is removed by employing a blanket etching process or a cell open mask.

4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the nitride layer is deposited with a predetermined thickness equal to or greater than the total thickness of lost portions of the hard mask insulation layer during the step (d) and the step (e).

5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein at the step (e), the hard mask is simultaneously removed.

6. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the inter-layer insulation layer is made of an oxide-based material and is etched by performing a self-aligned contact (SAC) etching process.

7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the SAC etching process proceeds by employing an etch gas such as C<sub>4</sub>F<sub>6</sub> and C<sub>5</sub>F<sub>8</sub>.

20

8. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step (a) includes the steps of:

depositing the nitride layer on the substrate on which the plurality of conductive patterns, the etch stop layer and the inter-layer insulation layer are sequentially formed, the substrate classified into a cell region and a peripheral circuit region;

forming the anti-reflective coating (ARC) layer on the nitride layer; and

forming the photoresist pattern on the ARC layer through an ArF photolithography;

5

9. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step (f) includes the steps of:

forming a conductive material for forming the plug to make an electric contact to the exposed substrate;

10 performing an etch-back process to remove a partial portion of the conductive material to diminish a height difference between the cell region and the peripheral circuit region; and

15 performing a chemical mechanical polishing process to the conductive material until an upper part of each conductive pattern is exposed.

10. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the step of forming the conductive material for forming the plug 20 proceeds by depositing the conductive material on an entire surface of the substrate or growing the conductive material from the exposed substrate through a selective epitaxial growth (SEG) technique.

25 11. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the photoresist pattern is formed in a line type or a hole type.

12. The method as recited in 1, wherein the conductive pattern is one of a gate electrode pattern, a bit line and a metal wire.

5       13. A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

      (a) forming a semiconductor substrate structure including a substrate, a nitride layer for forming a hard mask, a plurality of conductive patterns, an etch stop layer, an 10 inter-layer insulation layer, an anti-reflective coating (ARC) layer and a photoresist pattern;

      (b) loading the resulting semiconductor substrate structure into an etching equipment having at least two chambers;

15       (c) selectively etching the ARC layer and the nitride layer with use of the photoresist pattern as an etch mask to form a hard mask;

      (d) removing the photoresist pattern and the ARC layer;

20       (e) etching the inter-layer insulation layer disposed between the conductive patterns by using the hard mask as an etch mask to form a contact hole exposing the etch stop layer;

      (f) removing the etch stop layer formed at a bottom area of the contact hole to expose the substrate; and

25       (g) forming a plug electrically contacted to the exposed substrate, wherein the steps (c) and (e) to (f) proceeds in an in situ condition.

14. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the steps (c) and (d) are performed at a first chamber and the steps (e) and (f) are performed at a second chamber.

5 15. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the conductive pattern has a stack structure including a hard mask insulation layer and a conductive layer.

10 16. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein at the step (f), the etch stop layer is removed by employing a blanket etching process or a cell open mask.

15 17. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the nitride layer is deposited with a predetermined thickness equal to or greater than the total thickness of lost portions of the hard mask insulation layer during the step (e) and the step (f).

20 18. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein at the step (f), the hard mask is simultaneously removed.

19. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the inter-layer insulation layer is made of an oxide-based material and is etched by performing a SAC etching process.

25

20. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the SAC etching process proceeds by employing an etch gas such as C<sub>4</sub>F<sub>6</sub>

and C<sub>5</sub>F<sub>8</sub>.

21. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the step  
(a) includes the steps of:

5       depositing the nitride layer on the substrate on which  
the plurality of conductive patterns, the etch stop layer and  
the inter-layer insulation layer are sequentially formed, the  
substrate classified into a cell region and a peripheral  
circuit region;

10      forming the anti-reflective coating (ARC) layer on the  
nitride layer; and

      forming the photoresist pattern on the ARC layer through  
an ArF photolithography;

15      22. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the step  
(g) includes the steps of:

      forming a conductive material for forming the plug to  
make an electric contact to the exposed substrate;

20      performing an etch-back process to remove a partial  
portion of the conductive material to diminish a height  
difference between the cell region and the peripheral circuit  
region; and

25      performing a chemical mechanical polishing process to  
the conductive material until an upper part of each conductive  
pattern is exposed.

23. The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the step

of forming the conductive material for forming the plug proceeds by depositing the conductive material on an entire surface of the substrate or growing the conductive material from the exposed substrate through a SEG technique.

5

24. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the photoresist pattern is formed in a line type or a hole type.

25. The method as recited in 13, wherein the conductive 10 pattern is one of a gate electrode pattern, a bit line and a metal wire.